

## The Waves of the South Sea

The winds from the night in the Indonesian air did not feel cold, and despite the sun hiding behind the horizon, the humidity still makes it where wearing shorts is necessary. As Daniel Trite is walking along the tourist trodden sands of South Sea Beach in Java, he thinks about his much needed break from pulling all-nighters from procrastinating on his fifteen or more page essays and convincing his teachers to give him more time on his other assignments. He tells himself that his dream of traveling the world writing poetry starts on this beach. He sits down on the sand and looks out into the Indian Ocean. The air grows still and except for the sounds of waves and wind, the whole world is silent.

Daniel Trite closes his eyes in attempt to receive inspiration from this moment. Nothing comes. He opens his eyes, and a beautiful woman radiates in the distance. Wearing an aqua green dress, she has long black hair with pale white skin. She looks at him with blank yet beautiful eyes, and she is smiling coldly. Surprised, she signals him with her finger to come closer. He obliges out of curiosity, and simply because he finds her gorgeous. Like a dog attracted to a piece of meat, Daniel walks up to her somewhat hurriedly and without thought of anything else.

An adolescent vendor selling cigarettes approaches him. He turns around to tell him that he does not want his business, but he does not speak English. He then points at the direction of the woman, and the vendor looks at that direction with a confused look on his face. When Daniel turns around to look at the woman, all he sees is the water from the Indian Ocean. He looks around to see if she simply walked somewhere, but all he sees are sand and water.

Daniel drives back in his rental car to his hotel while thinking about the woman at the beach. He eventually reaches his hotel, which is an aqua green colored building called Roro Hotel hidden in the corner of the town. He enters the lobby of this not-so-well-lighted hotel and sees a statue of a black-haired woman that he did not notice when he first checked into the hotel. An old croon voice could be

heard in the distance, "I see that you're interested in the statue of Nyai Roro Kidul, the queen of the Southern Sea. She is quite beautiful."

The owner of the hotel slowly approaches him from the shadows of the hallway. Her slow movement, sunken face, and long white hair become visible in the lobby's light, and she gives a wry smile seeing the statue that Daniel is observing. She speaks remarkably good English as if she lived in the U.S. for a couple years.

Daniel is almost frightened by her appearance especially since the lobby is not well-lit. She speaks to him, "That statue is of the Goddess of the South Sea. I don't know if you saw, but her lower half is that of a snake."

"That's pretty weird. Why is that?" Daniel asks.

"She was not always like that. She was a full human at one time, and her life was prosperous. Here in this region, every town and village had a king and queen. As the princess of royalty, she had many women jealous of her. These women approached a local witch doctor in an effort to make her ugly. Making a deal with the witch doctor, she concocted a potion that would give the princess leprosy when the potion is consumed. One of the women sneaked into her house one day and poured the potion into her food. When she ate it, her skin immediately started to peel off like a snake's skin that sheds. In her anguish, she jumped into the Indian Ocean never to be seen ever again."

"I know that this is going to sound strange, but I think that I saw her last night by the beach."

"The princess is said to be very lonely. She is known for taking young men, usually sailors and fishermen, into the ocean to be with her forever."

Daniel Trite went back into his room to sleep. However, he could not stop thinking about the story that he heard from the hotel owner. While he was trying to sleep, he could hear the waves from the beach. Thinking it is just his imagination, he tries to go back to sleep again, but the crashing of the

waves against the sand could still be heard. He thought to himself, "I'm miles from the beach. Why would I be hearing waves from here?"

The constant sound of the waves makes him unable to sleep, so he decides to walk around the hotel. Once he steps out the door, he sees the black haired woman he saw at the beach from behind wearing the same long green dress. However, she appears to be hovering through the hallway. She ends up stopping in front of room number 23 and enters the room. Drawn to her beauty, he follows her but stops right in front of the door. As if he is compelled by an uncontrollable urge to see her, he knocks on her door. She answers almost immediately in a surprisingly childlike voice, "Come in."

Daniel walks into an aqua green-colored room. Red oriental rugs cover the green colored floors. In the center of the room covering a quarter of the wall is a painting of Nyai Roro Kidul, and many smaller paintings adorn the walls of the room. In front of the large painting is a small table with bowls of food and vases with flowers on it. Sitting blissfully on the greenish-blue bed in the corner is the black-haired woman. She admires the paintings with a youthful delight. The paleness of her skin brings light to the room. Daniel asks nervously, "How come you got this room?"

She answers with a slight giggle, "This room just calls out to me."

"Yeah, I guess. I mean, if you like green and all, then it's cool."

"It is cool in here. I feel like I am close to the ocean."

"I saw you at the beach."

"Yes, I love the water."

"Did you, you know, signal me to come towards you?"

She smiles before she responds, "Of course I did. I love handsome men such as yourself. I wanted you to see the ocean with me."

Daniel is taken aback by the very direct compliment that she gave him. He attempts to keep his composure but fails, "I, uh, yeah, uh, thanks. I mean, that would be cool. We can, like, see the ocean or whatever."

"Really? Then tomorrow night, please meet me at the same spot on the beach."

She gets up and slowly walks out of the room with a movement that is as if she is pushing herself with every step. As he is alone in the room, the people in the paintings feel as if they are staring at Daniel in the dark. He sits on the bed still warm from when she sat on it. The door suddenly opens. A walking head of white hair with legs stands in the doorway. Daniel is immediately startled, but then he realizes that it is the owner of the hotel.

She says to him with a tinge of anger, "What are you doing in this room? You aren't supposed to be here."

He responds in a panic, "I'm sorry. I didn't know. The woman I saw went into the room, and I kinda just found myself here."

"No one is allowed to enter the sanctity of this room. Don't you see? This room is dedicated to Nyai Roro Kidul."

"Look, I just saw that woman from the beach here. I think she hypnotized me or something, so I had to follow her into this room."

"This room is very sacred. I make sure to give offerings to Nyan Roro Kidul every day, and I also make sure that this whole room is spotless. What is that next to where you are sitting?"

The old woman points to something on the bed. It is a clear and object that looks like wrinkled plastic. Disgusted by the sight of it, Daniel jumps out of the bed. The old woman says, "I know what that is. I'll clean it up. Please leave the room now."

Daniel leaves and heads back to his room to sleep. The next morning, a breakfast is already prepared for him on a small table next to his bed. There is typical American food such as bread, bacon,

eggs, but there is also soup as well. Daniel eats the food and drinks the soup. The food tasted good and the soup was good but had a medicine-like taste.

After the meal, Daniel heads out of his room. He passes by room 23, looks sideways at the door and continues downstairs. In the lobby, he sees a tourist couple around his age. He nearly walks by them, but the girlfriend of that couple asks, "Are you a student?"

After some small talk, Daniel asks, "So, what did you guys think about the breakfast here? Everything was pretty good except for the soup."

They looked at each other with a confused look, and the boyfriend said to him, "We weren't served any breakfast. I didn't think they served that here."

Daniel heads outside to find inspiration for his poetry. He starts to walk around the town, but after a half mile, he begins to feel ill. He slowly and painfully walks back to the hotel, and the heat of the humidity is like a wave that pushes him backwards. He eventually reaches the hotel and sees the owner. He struggles to lift his hand up to gesture a 'hello' and continues to walk towards his room. Walking up the stairs is as difficult as army boot camp, and he leans on the railing and wills himself to make every step up the stairs. He eventually enters his room and falls face-first into his bed.

He has a pleasant dream of seeing the horizon while on the beach. It is quiet, except for the sound of the waves from the Indian Ocean. However, when he wakes up, he can still hear the waves from his room. Someone knocks on his door. He feels physically better and gets up. It is still dark in his room, but he feels a flakey-like substance as he is getting up. He turns on the lights, and he sees pieces of skin on the floor. He looks at his arms, and he sees that skin is peeling off like skin peeled from an apple. He starts to run around the room in a daze and even starts to try to keep his falling skin back onto his body. He cannot hear the constant knocking on his door, but he can still hear the sound of waves crashing onto the beach sand in the Indian Ocean. Screams of terror echo throughout the room, and the

familiar voice of the owner of the hotel is heard on the other side of the door, "Is everything all right in there?"

Daniel responds in a panic, "Yeah, everything is fine."

"It doesn't sound like everything is fine. I must go in there and see what is going on. There's so much noise that it's disconcerting."

The lock turns and the door opens. Daniel sees her and says, "Don't look at me. My skin's peeling off, and I don't know why."

"The same thing happened to Nyan Roro Kidul when she was still a human."

"Is there anything that I can do?"

"Legend has it that if you jump into the Indian Ocean, you could be cured. The water is said to have many medicinal effects."

Daniel runs outside of the hotel and into his rental car. He drives to the beach in disarray, not caring if any person or thing is in his way. He arrives at the beach in the dead of night all alone. He runs towards the water and sees the black-haired woman standing at the edge of the beach where the water hits the sand. She looks as if she is waiting for him.

Daniel comes towards her. She tells him, "I am glad that you could make it to our meeting."

Daniel responds in despair, "You still say that with me looking like this?"

She slightly pulls up her green dress and reveals that the lower half of her body is that of a snake. She tells him, "You see, I don't care what you look like, as long as you can be with me. I was poisoned a long time ago with a potion that would give me leprosy. My skin fell off, and I jumped into the Indian Ocean. When I was reborn, I looked like this. The snake part of me still sheds, never allowing me to forget the leprosy that I once had."

"This is a dream, right?"

"Close your eyes and find out."

Daniel closes his eyes while still standing. When he opens them, he sees the owner of the hotel where the black-haired woman stood. She tells him in her shriveled old voice, “Nyai Roro Kidul is a shape shifter as well. I am sorry to have tricked you, but I am so lonely. After many years and experimenting with different people, I discovered how to create the potion that gave me leprosy. Please close your eyes and open them once more.”

Daniel, with tears in his eyes, closes his eyes and opens them. He sees the black-haired woman again, and she tells him, “Now come with me into the Indian Ocean. The waves will carry our souls together forever.”

She sticks out her hand, and Daniel advances towards her. They hold hands and walk into the Indian Ocean together, never to be seen again.